

state of utah



DIVISION OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

DOUGLAS F. DAY
Director

1596 West North Temple/Salt Lake City, Utah 84116/801-533-9333

November 17, 1981

Mr. Cleon B. Feight, Director
Division of Oil, Gas and Mining
1588 West North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

Dear Jack:

We are alarmed about an ongoing mining project north of Vernal, Utah. Chevron Resources (formerly Stauffer Chemical Company) is operating an open-pit phosphate mine on Brush Creek and surrounding lands owned by them. Until this past spring, mining was conducted on a much smaller and more or less predictable scale than has been in evidence through this summer and fall. The visibly enlarged scope of the operation and its location within critical big game winter range and around a valuable trout fishery concerns us about the future of this vital habitat.

In addition to the rate of exploitation, we are concerned that adequate reclamation procedures are not being employed by Chevron Resources. To our knowledge, past land reclamation has been little more than token, with the majority of previously mined land still not rehabilitated. As regards the current operation, we question whether valuable topsoil is being stockpiled in adequate amounts to provide for a successful reclamation program. As we understand it, and we are certainly lacking specific details, Chevron Resources is committed to reclaiming approximately 25 acres annually. While this requirement may have been adequate had it been followed under past operational levels, it would appear grossly inadequate given Chevron's current program.

We have additional concerns with the potential for stream degradation and with disruption of drainage patterns on mined land. Brush Creek, which bisects the mine area, is classified as a high priority cold-water trout fishery. While access for fishing has been restricted by mine owners, the stream does provide valuable spawning habitat for both brown and cutthroat trout. This has become more significant with recent completion of the Bureau of Reclamation's Red Fleet Reservoir immediately downstream from the phosphate mine. The stream within the mine property will undoubtedly provide spawning habitat for reservoir fish and thus a degree of natural recruitment back to the reservoir.

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Much of the reservoir storage will be used as a municipal water supply for Ashley Valley, which further emphasizes the need for careful monitoring of potential mine impacts on the lower Brush Creek drainage. Past mining operations have not given necessary protection to the stream, and we are concerned that presesnt operations will expand and compound those past problems.

Our Northeastern Regional Office in Vernal had recent contact with your division concerning an inspection of the Chevron mine during September 1981 by your field personnel. The indication was that there are problems and that a more detailed look at the current program is warranted.

We feel the critical public values at stake support a careful examination of Chevron's program, and we would be pleased to participate with you in such an effort in whatever way we can be most helpful.

Sincerely,



Douglas F. Day
Director

cc: Temple A. Reynolds